

VZCZCXRO6744

PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #0943 1130426

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 230426Z APR 09

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2528

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY

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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/USFJ PRIORITY

INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 3674

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 6012

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 1344

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 4211

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 7476

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SIPDIS

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CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - TAIWAN

¶1. LEAD STORIES: Lead items on Thursday morning included the IMF's World Economic Outlook report saying that the global economy would likely contract 1.3 percent this year.

¶2. "Concern about 'Hollowing Out' of U.S.-Taiwan Relations" The liberal Asahi wrote (4/23): "The Taiwan Relations Act, which was passed in 1979 when the U.S. and China established diplomatic relations, marks its 30th anniversary this month. The act stipulates that Washington will provide defensive weapons to Taipei and help prevent China's possible attempt to unify Taiwan by force. However, while cross-strait tension has eased significantly due to the rapid increase recently in contact between China and Taiwan, relations between the U.S. and Taiwan based on the Taiwan Relations Act are reaching a turning point... The administration of Premier Hu of China has shifted the focus of its Taiwan policy to 'peaceful unification,' under which Beijing will try to consolidate Taipei over the long term through economic and cultural exchanges. Taiwan's Ma administration is acting in step with this policy, and there is an unprecedented friendly atmosphere between Beijing and Taipei. However, there is concern that such 'detente' could 'hollow out' the Taiwan Relations Act... Due to fears of pressure from China, no nation other than the U.S. will sell weapons to Taiwan. There has been no change in the situation that the U.S. is the only hope for Taiwan, which has only limited weapon production capabilities."

¶3. "President Ma to Be Tested" The liberal Mainichi wrote from Taipei (4/23): "Taiwanese President Ma expressed his view during an interview with Mainichi on Wednesday that he would place policy priority on economic exchanges with China to improve Taipei's relations with Beijing. Although his policy is based on the view that such moves would be indispensable to boosting the Taiwanese economy, many Taiwanese people are worried that difficult problems, such as the removal of missiles pointing toward Taiwan, could be put off. President Ma will be tested on how he exercises his ability to deal with the political and military challenges he faces."

ZUMWALT